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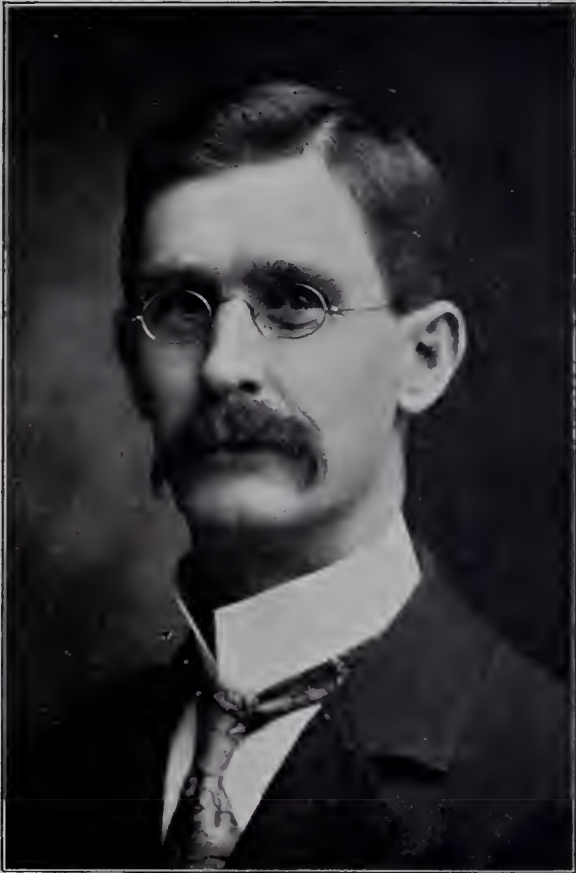
JESUS AS A MISSIONARY



O. E. BROWN, A.M., D.D.



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JOHN F. GOWEN
No. 1

JESUS AS A MISSIONARY

BY

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—
No. 3

THE MISSIONARY TRAINING SCHOOL

1905

This address was delivered in the Missionary Training School January 17, 1905, and was regarded by many as one of the most spiritual and inspiring messages they had ever heard. It is printed from stenographic notes, and is given in the free and easy style in which it was delivered to the School. It is impossible, however, to convey the same impression to the reader that was enjoyed by those who heard the address, for the presence of the speaker and the atmosphere of Christian fellowship and prayer on that occasion are lacking. The booklet is sent forth with the earnest prayer that the Great Remembrancer may enforce its message in the hearts of all who read it, that they may become truly devoted to the Supreme Teacher whose joy and life was found in obeying God through service to humanity—ED.



Jesus as a Missionary

LET us think for a moment over Christ's words in John xvii. 13-19:

But now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth.

As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

Christ affords us an inexhaustible study. We may study and study, we may think and love and serve, and yet feel all the while that we have just touched the surface of what Jesus is and what he may mean to us. I remember that Bishop Wilson, in closing his Cole Lectures on "The Witnesses to Christ, the Saviour of the World," said that he had begun to study Christ when he was yet a young man, that he had carried that study forward through the course of years, until now he was becoming an old man; and he added: "I feel after these long years of study that the great ocean of truth, Jesus Christ, lies out before me, and I have gathered here and there simply an occasional pebble along the shore." So it is that whenever we approach the study of Christ, we are really judging ourselves; and whenever we give our view of Christ, we are betraying how small we are and how little we can grasp of Christ. The way in which we study Christ, the line of thought we take up toward him, determines to a large extent the type of

our own lives. If we regard Christ simply as the author of a creed, the great purpose of our life will probably be to shape a system of truth that will be as complete as possible; and we shall become, perhaps, like those families of the Greek Church who care but little for anything except a creed that has about it the hoary look of age. If we regard Christ as the author of a great religious organization, the founder and promoter of a priestly caste, we shall be like the Roman Catholic Church—place Christ upon a kind of judicial throne, approach him with a feeling of dread, shut others out from him—and our Christ will be of small personal value to us. If we approach Christ as our Puritan ancestors did, as the one who came into the world to tighten up its moral code and to give us simply a code of life vastly more impossible than any otherwise devised, we shall feel that Christ has simply come to drive us to humiliation and despair and to make us feel our worthlessness in his presence. But the age in which we are living is a better age than any that

has gone before. The great work of Christ is recognized not as that of building a creed, not as that of founding a religious order that stands apart from other men, not as fashioning a code that shall stare us in the face, continually condemning us; but his great work is to share his life with us. He came to create a new life, even a divine life, in the souls of men.

To regard Christ as the Great Missionary of the divine life is the attitude we are now taking toward him; and the Christ of to-day is a richer Christ than he has ever been since the day when John, the beloved disciple, lay down to sleep his last sleep and to rest from his labors in the Lord. It is our purpose to-night to try to understand something of Jesus, our Lord, from this point of view; to look upon Jesus as the first Great Missionary, the author of a great missionary brotherhood, the founder of the one and only missionary religion—the founder of the one religion that has the missionary principle and purpose and spirit as its very essence. Jesus

was himself a missionary, and the author of the one great missionary enterprise that has shaped the course of the world's history. It is along the lines of Christ's missionary activity and missionary authorship that I want to speak to-night.

The men of the past who approached nearest to Christ were the prophets of Israel, whom we studied a few nights ago. They were heralds of the great missionary work that Christ did; and yet their point of view, their emphasis, and their power over the people were, to a very great degree, wasted and a failure until the day that Christ came and gathered up their teachings and made them a part of his own divine enterprise. For the Jews seemed to forget the message and thought and purpose of the prophets, and needed to be called back to them by Jesus, the Son of God; so that it is not amiss to say that Jesus is the Great Missionary, and the author of the only great missionary enterprise that the world has seen.

In the first place, Jesus is the author of what

we may call the missionary consciousness. It used to seem to me, as I studied Christ and the missionary work, that the missionary conscience was the most vital element in missions; but as I have sought to get the secret of Christ, it now seems to me to go deeper than that, and to go to the very depth of consciousness itself. Jesus created not merely a missionary conscience, for that touches simply one element of our natures, but a missionary consciousness. He brought his disciples into such a conscious personal relationship that they must be missionary, that their very sense of reality must prompt them to missionary activity. This is a much deeper thing than conscience. The great fact about Christ that made him a missionary was his consciousness of God as a Father. It was that one understanding of God that dominated all of Jesus's life. He knew God as a Father, and that knowledge was the light in which he walked; he was never away from it, never out of the spell of the love of his Father. Whenever he was left to spontaneous ex-

pression, the word "Father" came to his lips; whenever he kneeled in prayer, looking up into the face of God, the word "Father" poured from his heart. It is true he often used the name God; and yet if you will study the life of Christ, you will find that the use of the name God was always when some outer condition led him to accommodate his use of the name, and so to use the name God rather than the name Father. The deep reality of his life lay in the fact that God was his Father, and that God was fatherly in his whole nature, that the outgoings of God's nature were those of a Father, one that loves and loves to give, and one that says to each of his children: "All that I have is thine." Fatherhood in God means that God himself is a Missionary. Thus Jesus reveals the source of missions in the very heart of God himself. As God was a Father, and as Jesus was conscious of the great truth and reality that God was his Father, it was *that* which made him the great missionary that he became to men. Watch him as he goes about his

work, and in every great turn of life, in every great stress of life, you will see that it is the sense of the fatherhood of God, of the Father as present with him, that sustains him. One day, as the tide of popularity was turning away, the people were deserting him, and his work seemed to be going to pieces—a time, it would seem to us, of utter despair—he turned and said: “Father, I thank thee that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding and didst reveal them unto babes.” On the cross, when everything seemed to go against the Lord; that time when a momentary eclipse forced from his lips, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”—on the cross, even, there came from him over and over again that sacred name of Father. His sense of God’s fatherhood could not be clouded, and it was that knowledge of God which brought him from his heavenly home to walk the rugged way among the sons of men. He knew God as a Father, and that was the all-controlling reality of his life. And it

is just the awakening of that sense of God as the great reality, and of God really as a Father, that has been back of all missionary enterprises, that has been back of every great missionary, who has caught the light of Christ's life and lifted up his cross. Our own modern missionary movement was born in the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century; and in that Methodist revival there was just that one great experience, the awakening of men to a sense of God's fatherhood, the awakening of men to a realization that they were indeed the children of God. And when that consciousness came in, a new era dawned in the history of Christ's work among men. The very moment that we can get to the place where Christ was, and let the all-consuming reality of our lives be, "God is a Father, and God is my Father"—that moment there will be the missionary motive, the missionary enterprise, the missionary enthusiasm dominating our lives. We can never get any great philanthropic enterprise under way apart from just this sense of the fa-

therhood of God. Agnostic altruism has tried its work, and men have thought they might discover a law of love at the heart of things apart from God; but to-day, if there is any one marked feature of our times, it is the confessed failure of agnosticism, and the leaving of the great philanthropic enterprises in the hands of those whose prevailing conviction is that God is a being of personal love. Jesus is the author of the missionary consciousness, of the sense of God as a Father. Let each of us pause for a moment to ask: "Is *that* the supreme element in my nature?" I can measure my nearness to Christ by this test. If there should come upon me to-night a crushing disaster, what word would first come to my lips? If to-night I should be yonder on the foreign field, and those who despise my Lord and me should grasp me and be binding me to the cross for crucifixion, what word would first spring to my lips? Would I, in the face of all that darkness, be able to utter my innermost thought and feeling in that great word "Father?"

This is the deep consciousness which Jesus has brought into the world and which is the spring of all our missions of to-day. The greatest work for missions that Christ did was to reveal to us the heart of God as the great fountain of missionary energy, of missionary purpose, of missionary love. From no other source can the missionary movement be sustained.

Jesus, our Lord, by being the author of this missionary consciousness, became also the author of the missionary passion. The passion is not so deep as this consciousness of God, and yet flows from it in the longing to make God known as the Father of men. Jesus looked out upon the world of men from the standpoint of God's fatherhood. He regarded every man just as his Father did, and sought to bring every man into the attitude toward God, the Father, that he himself had. The passion of Jesus's life was to help give expression and make real God's fatherhood to men. God, he knew, was one who was yearning over every child of man; for, with Christ, there were

no restrictions upon the fatherhood of God. There were differences in the children of God, but God was the Father of them all, and was yearning over them as a Father. Jesus's passion was to help the Father to reclaim every lost child he could into the circle of his faithful children. It was toward his Father's children, who had made orphans of themselves in this world, that Jesus's yearning heart was going out. This was no mere sentiment or fanatical ardor on his part. He saw men as they really were. We can never know the shock that intimate contact with sinful men brought to our Lord. We can never know how horrible the actual men and women, steeped in sin, were to Jesus as he looked upon them; for the purer we are, the more deformed and offensive the sight of sin must be; and yet, as Jesus read the great meaning of sin and its deformity, he had that divine insight to look back of it and to see concealed behind it a child of God; and the passion of his life was to tear away the deformed mask that had concealed the children of God and

let these children, lost in sin, be recovered to their Father. This missionary passion of Jesus was so strong that it burned down all barriers. He never despaired. While he had a profounder sense of the meaning of sin than any other, he had a higher hope, as well, of the power of love. As he goes on in his course of life, it is marvelous that Jesus was never discouraged. His was a passion whose ardor could not be chilled. Were there moral barriers set up? Was it a sinful woman who came, and whom men pronounced impure and said: "Let us cast a stone at her?" The missionary passion of our Lord could burn down even the moral barrier and stand before her revealed as her friend and give her the vision of what was possible even to her. Was it a poor Samaritan woman outcast, with prejudice of race as well as moral depravity thrown about her? This missionary passion of Jesus could burn down both these barriers and in unconquerable optimism could speak to this woman of a despised race, this social outcast, the most majes-

tic truths he ever uttered. Was it a man whose business brought upon him the curse of social ostracism and whose very friendship would also bring the blight of ostracism? Jesus said, "I must have Matthew;" and his passion as the Son of God led him to take Matthew by the hand and to draw him into the inner circle of his disciples with all the risk that was involved. Was it an alien race like the Greeks? It was when these came to Jesus that he had what was virtually a second transfiguration; and his sense of the all-prevailing fatherhood of God led him, instead of calling them "Gentile dogs," to look up into the face of God with gratitude for the glory that was in prospect when these too should be led by him to honor and to recognize God as Father. It is this missionary passion, kindled to a flame in the hearts of the Moravians, that has made them the great missionary agents of the world. The love of Jesus Christ, the passion of Christ taking hold of their hearts, sent them out to the very ends of the earth and made them believe that the

slave and outcast were valuable for the kingdom of God. It made them take the motto: "We shall go where others will not go, and undertake tasks which others will not undertake." That same passion, burning in their souls, made them willing and ready at any cost to bring back the wayward, wandering children of God. The passion to express God's love, to reclaim loveless and darkened lives was sustained in Jesus by the vision of the kingdom of God. He looked down upon this awful wreckage of humanity, saw its ruin and its waste, and from that turned to another vision, the vision of the kingdom of God, in which God's purpose of love should be realized in all the lives of men. And so Jesus gave to the world this passion and this vision that fire the missionary heart to-day. It is true that Buddhists seem to have something of the passion for helping men, but it is a passion rather for suppressing themselves than for uplifting others. With Jesus only it is the passion and the joy of life to see in every man a possible child of God,

and to throw open for him the portals that lead into the inner chamber where God the Father is to be found, the true home place of the soul. I was reading Helen Keller's beautiful little book on "Optimism," the one whose life was as dark within as without until a friend brought to her that precious word "father" and taught her to think of God as her Father. The outcome enabled her to paint those beautiful pictures that are drawn on the pages of her remarkable book. If any one in this day could complain of God, it would be Helen Keller, and yet she says there rises before her a vision and a call to work in helping to bring the vision to pass. She sees a time when there shall be no America, no England, no France, no Germany, but one family of God; one law, the law of peace; one ambition, the ambition to work; and one taskmaster, God himself. The thought of God as a Father has fired even that soul with a passion for the realization of God's fatherly purpose in the world. Are you and I as near to Jesus Christ as that one who has

had so slight opportunities and so few avenues of approach to the things of the higher life?

The other great missionary work that Jesus has done is that of becoming the author of missionary equipment. Passion that cannot work is torture. Passion that can express itself and find ways of realizing itself is the most exquisite possible joy. And so the course of Jesus's life is marked not so much by suffering as by divine joy, for it is a movement toward the realization of his great passion of love. Jesus is the author of missionary equipment. He does not put the task upon us without supplying the resources with which the task may be performed. The missionary equipment that Jesus has given us is the privilege of prayer: on the manward side, it is prayer; on the Godward side, it is the Holy Spirit. And Jesus has said to you and to me, as he said to the disciples of old: "My privilege is your privilege, the great privilege of being bound to God by ties that are ever new and strong." You will follow through the course of Jesus's life only

to find that the marked feature of it all was prayer. There are just those two things that explain Jesus's life: the Spirit without measure and prayer without ceasing. The last is the key to the first. The very light of Jesus's life was prayer, and the Spirit without measure was the inevitable consequence of that prayer life. It would be very valuable for us, if we had the time, to spend the remainder of the evening in trying to get at the prayer element in Christ's life and the value of it as an equipment. You may watch Jesus as he comes through every great crisis of his life, and you will find that he prepares himself for it in prayer. "The struggles of Jesus," Dr. George Adam Smith says, "are not where we usually believe them to be. If I were to ask you where Jesus had his greatest conflicts, no doubt you would point to the temptation, to his desertion by the multitude; you would point to his trial, to his crucifixion; but as I read the life of Christ, the battles of that life were fought out and won before the crises came. They were fought

out and won in the realm of prayer." When Jesus is before the temptation, it is the prayer to God which brings, "This is my beloved Son," and this clear voice makes him proof against all the approaches of Satan to question his Sonship. When Jesus, at the crisis of his public ministry, is about to select the men upon whom he is to lavish his fullest love and to whom he is to commit the whole future of his work, his struggle is not when, in the morning time, he comes to select them, but in the nighttime which he is spending in prayer with his Father. The day is a day of peaceful work, for the night has been a night of agonizing prayer. When the hour of the crucifixion has come, Jesus stands with perfect calmness before the high priests and, later, before Pilate. There is no sign of struggle, no note of anguish; for Jesus has already won the victory. Already in Gethsemane he has fought it out in the hour of prayer, and has come fully equipped for the supreme test of his life. Jesus not only anticipated the great victories of his life in

prayer, but he followed them with prayer. The most important praying we do is sometimes after we have won, or after we have failed, in our work for God. You may recall that, as Jesus had done his great first day's work at Capernaum, when he had won that great city and bound it about his feet as his servant, he went out quite a while before day for prayer, to commune with his Father. It was that which sustained Christ in his successes and gave them their meaning. So Jesus gave us the privilege of prayer to prepare us for our struggles and to clothe us with power, with even the power to command God; for in prayer we cease to be servants and God serves us. God himself puts his power at our disposal if we are willing to coöperate with him. I think it is true, as Bishop Thoburn has said, that the greatest sin of Christendom is the failure to make the most of its prayer privilege. Our failure to use the prayer privilege is the secret of our neglect to undertake the greater things that God would have us do. When we awake to the use

of this great power which Christ has put at our disposal, there is no limit to what may be effected, even through our simple and limited lives. Jesus's missionary equipment is in his promise, "I am with you," and claiming this promise is the very spirit of prayer; for prayer is none other than practicing the fatherhood of God, practicing the friendship and the presence of Jesus Christ. I could, over and over, repeat the stories of what the prayer power has done for our great missionary enterprise; but I cannot pause for that tonight. I want to keep you face to face with Jesus Christ and to keep you thinking upon prayer as the equipment for all the services which our Lord has asked you to do for him.

The last thought to which I shall direct your attention is that Jesus has become the author of the true missionary method, the true way of doing missionary work. The spirit is always nine-tenths of the method, and what we need to-day is not so much machinery as power; for somehow, when you get the spirit, it will come into ex-

pression ; somehow love can find its truest expression, and even faltering expression is often the most effective. So Christ did not leave us with mechanical methods of activity. Perhaps we need, more than anything else, to get back to the simplicity of God's missionary method. All that Christ asked was to get into the presence of the person. Look at Christ as he trains those twelve men. It was not so much his discourses that made these men what they were, for they did not thoroughly appreciate the teachings of those discourses at the time. They were not moved so much by his miracles or by the wonders of his life as by the supreme effect of companionship with him. He counted upon that companionship above everything else. Personal companionship, personal presence, is the secret of the incarnation itself. It means that Christ sought, above all, to put his life alongside of other lives. The one great method of Jesus was to count upon his very presence as winning, as drawing, as compelling, and as triumphant. We know that

sometimes one with a heart of love can sit down by our side and hold our hand in absolute silence and thus can do infinitely more for us than that other friend who can come to us and talk freely and readily and formally about the things that are eating at our very heart. We are forgetting sometimes, I fear, the great secret of Jesus's missionary method, the method of personal presence, whereby the life of love pours itself out into the love of the other life. Jesus's method was the vital method of motherhood. He sought to take the other life into his life, to nourish and cherish it there and to be willing, at the very peril of death itself, to bring that other life to its own conscious privilege, to bring it into the household and family of God. The way of the cross is the way of identification, the way of love, the way of paying the uttermost cost with the uttermost simplicity. If you, my brother, are studying methods of work and trying to find this and that and the other plan for approaching men, remember that Jesus ever in the simplest, most

spontaneous way brought his love alongside of other lives and confidently looked for the most gracious results to follow. If your presence does not carry the magnetism of Jesus Christ, if something in eye or face or hand does not reveal the transfigured Christ, the things you say, the method you adopt, the machinery of your life will count for very little. It was because the Incarnate One threw himself alongside us and was willing to go the whole length of identification with us, even down to the cross, that all power has been given unto him. The magnetism of Christ is the magnetism of personal love, of reverence for the other life. The magnetism which shall make us efficient workers is Christ formed within us.

And so is Christ waiting to be to you and to me the author of the missionary purpose, of the missionary life, of a great missionary career. Let us to-night then throw open our lives to the incoming of Jesus Christ; let us share with him that certainty that God is our Father; let us keep

it brighter than the meridian sun itself, the certainty that a Father's heart is over us and about us. As we look into the heart of God and see the yearning of the Father over his wandering children, let us catch the passion of Jesus to make that father love a reality to all the children of men whom we can reach. Let us keep this missionary passion constantly glowing upon the altar of our hearts. Let us continue in unceasing fellowship with Christ in prayer. For if these things be in us and abound, we shall find the way to be efficient servants of our Lord in any and every field of service into which he may be gracious enough to call us. Let us pray.

We do thank thee, O Christ, that thy love has touched our lives. We do thank thee that thou art with us to-night, that thou art waiting to be with us in a deeper and truer sense, if we will allow thee. We ask thee to-night that thou wilt take us into that inner circle of thy disciples, living close about thee, to catch thy most sacred words, to understand the deepest purpose of

thy life, to read the infinite love that is back of all thou dost say and do, and to understand thee so well that thou canst commit to us the keeping of thy gospel, the keys even of thy kingdom. We aspire to be so like thee, O Christ, that thou canst put into our hands the key of power and can say to us that we can unlock and lock, that we can unbind and bind, that the power of our lives shall be as the very power of the Christ life itself. We are thy servants; and our only ambition, O Christ, is to be more effective in thy work. Do thou show us wherein we are depriving ourselves of larger effectiveness, and grant to-night that we may throw open our lives, that thou mayst be formed within us, and that as thy life was one triumphant revelation of God the Father, so too those who know us may know God in Christ as the Almighty and the All-Loving. We ask it for thy name's sake. Amen.

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